

EXHIBIT 102

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'We Don't Have Proof Yet'

Violent fantasy goes mainstream on the left.

By *James Taranto*

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EXHIBIT

Plaintiff's 181

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(Best of the Tube tonight: We'll be on Fox News Channel's "Hannity" tonight as part of the "Great American Panel." The program starts at 9 p.m. ET, and we'll be on in the latter half hour. A repeat airs at midnight ET.)

After the news broke of the attempted murder of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords in Tucson, Ariz., it took less than an hour for somebody to point an accusatory finger across the political aisle. At 2:28 p.m. ET Saturday, CNN's Martin Savidge was interviewing David Fitzsimmons, a political cartoonist for the Arizona Daily Star, who offered this reaction:

Fitzsimmons: I must tell you, as a columnist who's covered politics in this state, it was inevitable from my perspective.

Savidge: Why do you say that?

Fitzsimmons: Because the right in Arizona, and I'm speaking very broadly, has been stoking the fire of heated anger and rage successfully in this state. And, you know, it's just stunning when you consider Congresswoman Giffords's positions on the issues. She is a centrist. She is a moderate. And I don't know who the shooter is--have no idea who the shooter is--but what could possibly motivate an individual to be enraged against, or to take down, a moderate centrist? To me that just paints a picture of how off the mark the politics of this state have grown.

The Star reported in an editorial yesterday that Fitzsimmons and the paper both apologized for what he described, with the benefit of hindsight, as "emotional, partisan and inappropriate remarks." No such apology has been forthcoming from Paul Krugman or his employer, the New York Times, which published these words of his at 3:22 p.m. Saturday:

We don't have proof yet that this was political, but the odds are that it was. She's been the target of violence before. And for those wondering why a Blue Dog Democrat, the kind Republicans might be able to work with, might be a target, the answer is that she's a

Democrat who survived what was otherwise a GOP sweep in Arizona, precisely because the Republicans nominated a Tea Party activist.

Fitzsimmons and Krugman both admitted that their suppositions about the attack had no factual basis. Apart from the shooting itself, the only fact that was in evidence was Krugman's assertion that Giffords has "been the target of violence before," which was overwrought. Krugman linked to a [Politico](#) article according to which "a brick was thrown through her district office window" after the ObamaCare vote--an act of vandalism, not violence, unless people were in the office at the time.

PODCAST

[James Taranto on the left and the shooting.](#)

What the [Washington Post](#), in a news story, offensively calls the "easy assumption" that "Giffords was targeted by a tea partier" turns out to have been false. To the extent that the suspect, Jared Loughner, had political views, they were disjointed and impossible to categorize--think John Hinckley meets No Labels. A list of his favorite books included "Mein Kampf" and "The Communist Manifesto"; a YouTube video titled "[My Final Thoughts: Jared Lee Loughner!](#)" is filled with incomprehensible syllogisms such as this: "If B.C.E. years are unable to start then A.D.E years are unable to begin. B.C.E. years are unable to start. Thus, A.D.E years are unable to begin."

One might say that Fitzsimmons and Krugman were merely engaging in speculation. As [John Podhoretz](#) observes in the New York Post: "Our compulsive hunger always to know first, speak first and decide first has only been amplified by the fact that we can now all participate instantly in a virtual version of a national cocktail-party conversation on Twitter, Facebook and blogs."

Another way of describing Fitzsimmons's and Krugman's comments is that they were fantasies. In the absence of facts, each man constructed a fictional story to explain what had happened. These stories tell us nothing about the external world, but they give us a window into the psyches of Fitzsimmons and Krugman.

Both imagined the assassin not only as politically motivated but as acting according to political logic. They actually disagreed about whether Giffords, as a centrist, was a suitable target in the mind of their notional assassin, with Krugman arguing in the affirmative and Fitzsimmons asking rhetorically, "What could possibly motivate an individual to be enraged against, or to take down, a moderate centrist?"--as if such an action would be more understandable if the victim's voting record had been more consistent with standard ideological categories.

The notion that the killer acted according to some political logic existed only in the minds of people like Fitzsimmons and Krugman. It was pure fantasy, and it turned out not to correspond with reality. Yet many on the left, including in the mainstream media, are treating this fantasy as if it were fact, or at least a legitimate point of view.

As with any left-wing fantasy nowadays, the former governor of Alaska plays a central role. "Rep. Gabrielle Giffords' Blood Is on Sarah Palin's Hands After Putting Cross Hair Over District," screams a headline in yesterday's New York Daily News. "Liberals Blame Sarah Palin in Wake of Tucson Shooting," reads the headline of Politico story posted at 4:23 p.m. Saturday, less than three hours after news of the shooting broke. Straight-news reporters, too, put Palin into the story. An Associated Press dispatch on the massacre gave her four paragraphs; a New York Times report, three paragraphs.

Why? Because last March, Palin's political action committee included Giffords on a list of 20 representatives it was targeting for defeat. All came from districts in which John McCain outpolled Barack Obama, and all voted for ObamaCare. (Only two of the 20, Giffords and West Virginia's Rep. Nick Rahall, made it to the 112th Congress. Two retired, one lost a Senate bid, one was defeated in a primary, and the other 14 were beaten in November.)

The list was illustrated by a map showing cross hairs--they looked like gun sights, although a Palin spokeswoman has said they were actually surveyor's symbols--in the approximate geographic locations of the representatives' districts. At the time, the left cried bloody murder, claiming that Palin was inciting violence against members of Congress.

Again, this was pure left-wing fantasy. As blogger John Sexton noted contemporaneously, the Democratic Leadership Committee and the Democratic National Campaign Committee had both earlier produced similar maps, albeit using bull's-eyes instead of cross hairs. The DCCC map "targeted" specific congressmen and, unlike Palin's map, included their photographs.

Neither Palin's map nor the Democrats' maps were an incitement to violence. They employed an ordinary visual metaphor as part of a political campaign. (The word "campaign" is itself a martial metaphor.) No evidence has emerged that Jared Loughner even knows who Sarah Palin is, much less that he construed the map as a command to commit murder.

To be sure, Saturday's horror casts the Palin map in an unappealing light. It would be in poor taste to continue displaying it. Accordingly, SarahPAC quickly removed it from its website. But it is all over the Web, disseminated far and wide by people who purport to believe that *the document they are distributing* is an incitement to violence.



Paul Krugman, wrong but undaunted.

GETTY IMAGES

"We don't have proof yet that this was political," Paul Krugman wrote on Saturday afternoon. Proof emerged very quickly that it wasn't. Yet having jumped to a conclusion and been proved wrong, Krugman plows ahead anyway. In today's column he blames Saturday's crime on "the national climate" created by "toxic rhetoric" that is "coming, overwhelmingly, from the right."

The New Yorker's George Packer, similarly, uses the shooting as an occasion to denounce conservatives:

Many conservative leaders, activists, and media figures have made a habit of trying to delegitimize their political opponents. . . . This relentlessly hostile rhetoric has become standard issue on the right. (On the left it appears in anonymous comment threads, not congressional speeches and national T.V. programs.)

There is no denying that "relentlessly hostile rhetoric" can be found on the right, and also on the left. (On the center, too, for that matter.) Opinions will vary as to where the problem is worst, and it is human nature to find fault with the other side more readily than with one's own.

That said, it seems to us there is a very strong case to be made that the ugliest political rhetoric of the past 48 hours has been that coming from the side whose leading voices are attempting to make sense of a senseless crime by blaming their opponents for it.

Or perhaps we should say from the side that is attempting to *exploit* the crime in this manner. Politico quotes an unnamed "veteran Democratic operative" who offers this advice to the White

House:

"They need to deftly pin this on the tea partiers," said the Democrat. "Just like the Clinton White House deftly pinned the Oklahoma City bombing on the militia and anti-government people."

The Washington Examiner's Byron York recalls how Bill Clinton, with the advice of Dick Morris, did that:

At a White House meeting . . . on April 27 [1995], Morris presented Clinton with a comeback strategy based on his polling. Morris prepared an extensive agenda for the session, a copy of which he would include in the paperback version of his memoir, Behind the Oval Office. This is how the April 27 agenda began:

AFTERMATH OF OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

A. Temporary gain: boost in ratings--here today, gone tomorrow

B. More permanent gain: Improvements in character/personality attributes--remedies weakness, incompetence, ineffectiveness found in recent poll

C. Permanent possible gain: sets up Extremist Issue vs. Republicans

Later, under the heading "How to use extremism as issue against Republicans," Morris told Clinton that "direct accusations" of extremism wouldn't work because the Republicans were not, in fact, extremists.

These days Dick Morris leans Republican, a reminder that foul character can be found everywhere on the political spectrum, again including in the center. In light of his advice to Clinton, though, we can see why Politico's "veteran Democratic operative" would not want his name revealed. *His* idea is as boneheaded as it is depraved.

It is one thing to "pin" the Oklahoma City bombing on "the militia," a fringe movement with which the perpetrator seems to have had some sympathy. It is quite another to blame Saturday's massacre on "the Tea Partiers," a mainstream movement that has the support of somewhere on the order of 40% of Americans, but not, by all accounts, the suspect.

Further, it is too late to avoid " 'direct accusations' of extremism." The media have been filled with them for the past two awful days.

Thus far President Obama's response to Saturday's horrific crime has been appropriate and low-key. Our expectation is that he will not take the low road paved by the likes of Paul Krugman and Politico's unnamed operative.

"Even if hate is what many want to hear, that doesn't excuse those who pander to that desire," a newspaper columnist wrote recently. "They should be shunned by all decent people." If the president wants to exercise real leadership, he could call on Americans, including his own supporters, to resist and repudiate the impulse to blame political opponents for Saturday's insane and evil acts.

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